Le Fil Rouge du Destin

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/2203632.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	F/F, F/M
Fandom:	Kill la Kill
Relationships:	Kiryuuin Satsuki/Matoi Ryuuko, Gamagoori Ira/Mankanshoku Mako, Jakuzure Nonon/Sanageyama Uzu
Characters:	Matoi Ryuuko, Kiryuuin Satsuki, Mankanshoku Mako, Gamagoori Ira, Jakuzure Nonon, Sanageyama Uzu, Inumuta Houka, Iori Shirou, Soroi Mitsuzou
Additional Tags:	Romance, Drama, Sibling Incest
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Les Soeurs Ciseaux
Stats:	Published: 2014-08-26 Completed: 2014-09-25 Words: 17,743 Chapters: 12/12

Le Fil Rouge du Destin

by BleedingBlade

Summary

Weeks after the resolution of the Life Fiber Crisis, a lost and exhausted Kiryuin Satsuki falls gravely ill. As Matoi Ryuko fights to save her sister's life, she discovers that the threads that bind her to Satsuki wind all too quickly to the realms of the forbidden.

The Patching

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------MATOI RYUKO-------

You're not sure when it started, though you now suspect it began long before the crisis ended, but you remember a beginning of sorts when you saw her standing in the sun, her hair cut in a pageboy style, and you felt the first shock of the day reverberating through your soul. Why hadn't you noticed until then—how could you have possibly failed to notice until then—how breathtakingly *pretty* she was?

You'd barely seen her since your mother died; everyone—Mataro included—had been far too busy resettling or relocating. You were so entranced by the curve of her jaw line and by the readiness of her blushes, that you hardly even noticed how Mako had co-opted her into your date. You floated through the impromptu photo shoot and the unplanned shopping spree, and the fog was so thick you barely even registered the descent of the Elite Four (though you did notice the withered clump of flowers snarled in Gamagori's sweaty fists) and just like that it was just the two of you and you felt the second shock of the day vibrating in your head. Why had you always assumed how awkward your re-acquaintance would be?

Because there she was, smiling at you and laughing, and it was so, *so* easy to forget that you were two former rivals turned maladjusted siblings, the sole survivors of an apocalyptically dysfunctional family whose legacy could only be (hopefully) eroded by time.

And before you knew it, the sun was setting and you were walking her to her car and you felt the third shock of the day as a quivering in your heart. Why, oh why, did it actually hurt to see her go?

So you called out to her then, all the shocks of the day manifesting themselves as an uncharacteristic quaver in your voice, and asked:

"When…when will I see you again?"

And oh, the radiance on her face then when you managed to stammer out the words. It caused a strange twinge in your chest, similar in intensity to what you felt the day your mother ripped your beating heart out, only this time it felt warm and wonderful and so shockingly right.

-------KIRYUIN SATSUKI-------

You hadn't expected you'd run into them on their promised date. Three frantic weeks had passed since your mother's demise and you'd spent that time organizing the formal closure of Honnouji Academy while the city's residents had moved.

You'd have worked for even longer if the Elite Four hadn't threatened mutiny, Jakuzure practically screaming in her ire: "If the world nearly ending can't get *your* priorities right, at least do your subordinates the favor of giving them a break!"

You'd wisely refrained from pointing out that they were no longer your subordinates and that you hadn't actually asked their help, and as always, Gamagori had tactfully translated your oldest friend's outburst as "an expression of collective concern for Satsuki-sama's well-being."

So you'd gone home and slept for the first time in a week and woken up in consternation the next day, because the last time you'd felt any sense of personal freedom had been when you were five years old.

But you were never the kind to wallow in the past or dither in the present, and so you'd opened your enormous wardrobe and pulled out the first three items that lay within reach. Staring at your reflection, you realized that something didn't quite feel right, and after a few moments of consideration, you took a pair of scissors from your desk, sat yourself in front of the mirror, and gave yourself a jaw-length bob.

You assumed you must have done a respectable job because Soroi nearly dropped the teapot from its tray. "You're looking exceptionally lovely this morning, Satsuki-sama." You waved away his offer to drive you out, and after five minutes of relatively aimless cruising, found yourself parking on a hill. You'd been clutching your bag, thinking of where to go, when you heard Mankanshoku wailing your name, and you'd turned then and locked your eyes with *hers,* and the shock in those cobalt blue depths would have been amusing if it hadn't affected you so strangely and so suddenly.

You didn't expect her to welcome you so readily, especially on her post-apocalyptic date with the one person in the universe who could reliably extract her from the various depths of madness. But she was happy to have your pictures taken and encouraging when Mankanshoku begged you to model a skirt or two. And when Mankanshoku disappeared with Gamagori under a Diva-sponsored abduction (the operation had nearly failed when all four of your former subordinates finally recognized you underneath your hairstyle), she'd asked you out to coffee and insisted on shouldering the bill.

She stared at you as you sipped your chai, then stated in a surprisingly gentle voice: "You seem a little tired, Satsuki. I suppose you've been working yourself hard again."

You caught yourself on the verge of dismissing her observation: you'd become so accustomed to maintaining a strong and stalwart front. After a moment's internal battle, you reluctantly conceded: "The impromptu shopping trip with Mankanshoku fatigued me, I believe."

She raised her eyebrows then. "I always thought rich people found shopping easy—though I suppose doing anything with Mako can tire *anyone* out."

“I’ll be sure to warn Gamagori then,” you teased her, and she promptly turned as red as the crimson streak in her hair.

“You know that’s not what I meant,” she muttered, and to spare her from further embarrassment, you deftly switched the subject. “I’m not accustomed to making clothing selections, to be honest. I was the heiress to a fashion empire, after all, and I had *everything* that was available.”

“That’s right,” she responded, “though I wouldn’t call a front for an alien invasion a ‘fashion empire’ exactly.” After a pause, she added. “You really don’t have to try though—choosing between clothes, I mean. You look beautiful in whatever you’re in; even just a blanket looks good on you.”

The uncalculated earnestness of the compliment took you both by surprise—so much so that it was a full moment later that you both realized the other possible import of what she’d said. At that point, you blushed just as much as she did and the rest of the afternoon glided by in a cloud of agreeable confusion.

You weren’t prepared for the day to end so suddenly, and for someone unused to wallowing in the past or dithering in the present, you didn’t quite know what to do after she’d walked you to your car. Then she’d called back with the most uncharacteristic and *endearing* note of uncertainty in her voice and asked:

“When…when will I see you again?”

You barely just managed to keep the pitch of your voice low. “How’s tomorrow, over dinner? If you’re free, that is.”

The look of unabashed delight on her face told you all you needed to know.

-------MANKANSHOKU MAKO-------

People always spoke about what an underachiever you were, and you accepted this as a fact as tranquilly as you digested your mother’s croquettes. But you knew you were no dimwit where Ryuko-chan was concerned, and the look on her face when you both found Satsuki-sama at the top of the hill was all you needed to turn your after-we-save-the-world date into a threesome from a twosome.

It made you ridiculously happy, of course, because even if she’d terrified you a good tenth of your life and given at least half-a-dozen commands that authorized your outright execution, you’d never—not even once—hated Satsuki-sama. You’d always thought that she was beautiful and intelligent and strong, even if a little extreme in her ways; and then you’d met Ryuko-chan and thought that she was beautiful and intelligent and strong, and a little extreme in her ways too; and it hadn’t surprised you *in the least* that they’d fought so much because that’s what people do when they’re terribly alike and it’s exactly why you and Ryuko-chan

get along so well because you're as different as two croquettes with different mystery ingredients can ever be.

And you were determined to help Ryuko-chan out then, because you *knew* that even if your best friend was strong enough to save the world, she turned strangely weak when it came to family—and especially when it involved Satsuki-sama.

Then the fun had gotten even better when the Elite Four arrived and you had to rescue those poor little flowers from Gamagori-senpai's hands, and before you knew it, the other Divas had disappeared, Satsuki-sama had disappeared, and Ryuko-chan had disappeared with Satsuki-sama. This last discovery didn't surprise you all that much but Gamagori-senpai's passing out when you gave him a goodbye kiss on the cheek did take the rest of your attentions for the remainder of the day. For such a strong, strong man, he could be so oddly weak, but that didn't surprise you either.

-------INUMUTA HOUKA-------

There were very few mysteries in the world that could elude you for long, and you kept them as an encrypted list hidden in an obscure detail in the intricate wallpaper of your impossibly inaccessible laptop. But the look you'd seen on Matoi's face that afternoon meant that you could scratch one item off your inventory of the unknown. In the entire history of your observations of Honnouji Academy's Student Council President, *no one*—bar her diabolical mother of course—had ever managed to escape the magnetism of Lady Satsuki's charm, and one of the things that had intrigued you about Matoi from the very start (apart from her preposterous strength and imbecilic audacity) was how impervious she'd been to your mistress's charisma.

But the look on Matoi's face earlier (that dazed, almost rapturous, certainly bewildered gaze) told you that it wasn't an immunity to Lady Satsuki's charm at all, but simply an intense and deliberate aversion to authority of *any kind*. Suddenly presented with a Satsuki without the usual trappings of rank or the customary insignia of office, with nothing more—and nothing *less*—than the utter magnetism of her beauty, her grace and her reserve, it was entirely understandable for poor Matoi to be struck head-over-heels.

The new mystery that was opening up, *however,* was the question of how Lady Satsuki would respond.

Satisfied with both the consolidation of your knowledge of the universe and the prospect of a novel intellectual puzzle, you called the attention of the two comrades bickering several paces ahead. "Jakuzure, Sanageyama, we need to go back. I do believe Gamagori's passed out on poor Mankanshoku."

Image *of Satsuki and Ryuko illustrated by artist* ***Emuro_Gemini****.*

Chapter End Notes

Hello there and thank you for reading my first *Kill La Kill* fanfiction piece! It's been a while since I last did something like this and I'm happy to be back in the fiction writer's seat.

While this story is a romance, it also continues *Kill La Kill*'s tradition of acting as a commentary on all sorts of things.

This first chapter, for instance, was a literary exposition on the power of clothing and appearances to shape social perception and personal behavior. In the ending credits of episode 24, we're treated to a series of vignettes of Satsuki sporting a layered hairstyle and a layered look—a dramatic shift from the razor sharp edges of her previous single-length hairstyle and militarized look. What I wanted to highlight in the first chapter was the fact that this wasn't just an outfit change—it was an outlook change—and I wanted to explore how that shift affected the people who interact with Satsuki, especially Ryuko. Inumuta's analysis at the end of the chapter pretty much sums everything up, because authority, insignia, office and rank dominated the relationship between Satsuki and Ryuko throughout the show. Remove those elements, and it's unsurprising that Ryuko looks at Satsuki as if she's seeing her for the first time. In many ways, she is

seeing Satsuki for the first time and what she sees shocks her. (The word “shock” repeats itself several times in the Ryuko section.)

It’s different with Mako, of course, because Mako doesn’t interact with appearances, masks, performers or surfaces. This is why no one antagonizes her and nothing surprises her. (The word “surprise” repeats itself several times in the Mako section.) Mako easily reconciles the contradictions between Satsuki’s altruistic intentions and despotic methods, between Ryuko’s physical strength and psychological weakness, and between Gamagori’s physiological bluntness and emotional sensitivity.

Of course, this story isn’t just about literary expositions. As you can tell from the writing, I bear an immense love for the character of Kiryuin Satsuki, and the story is also an apology of sorts for how badly Ryuko treats her and for how little credit she gets. So yes, it is a romance between Satsuki and Ryuko—and it is a romance about Satsuki herself. I hope you enjoy it!

P.S. Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Fraying

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------IORI SHIRO-------

You'd been worrying about her for days now, and you could that tell your uncle felt the same.

It began about two months after the crisis ended.

You'd thought perhaps it was just the chronic excitement compounded by the constant effort: she was relocating a city, closing an academy, disbanding a community, and recreating a family. It made you happy to see her happy, so you didn't say a word when Ryuko-sama visited, and overstayed, and wreaked her customary havoc on Satsuki-sama's spartan routines and regimented schedules.

Then you started noticing the tremors in her hands, the shadows on her cheeks, how she tired so, *so* quickly and easily, though no one else—apart from your uncle, of course—was around her often enough to see.

Then late one night (she always came back late at night, except when she was expecting Ryuko-sama for dinner), you saw her sway ever so slightly, and your eyes had widened at the uncommon sight. She'd caught herself just in time, her trembling fingers clutching the door frame and you'd wondered to yourself when those slender hands had become so pale.

Your uncle had confronted her there and then. And three hours later, after running every test imaginable, you'd sat and stared at the figures on the sheets while an icy terror gripped your chest.

"Oji-sama," you whispered to your uncle, as he stared at you with frightened eyes. "Lady Satsuki…Lady Satsuki is dying."

-------SOROI MITSUZO-------

You'd seen her endure so many trials and survive so many hardships that it had never remotely occurred to you that she would be struck down by illness.

Your nephew had explained it as simply as he could: after years of strain exacerbated by months of abuse, your mistress's immune system was failing, if not actually destroying itself. The symptoms were familiar even if the condition was unknown; the current medical literature listed the likely prognosis as death.

You'd have wept if tears didn't compromise the dignity she highly valued. The look in her eyes when she called you to her bedside told you she already knew.

"Please call the Kiryuin family lawyer, Soroi. I need to revise my will." She quickly softened at your look of distress. "I don't intend to die that easily, but if I do, I don't want Ryuko going back to the slums."

"Of course, my lady."

"And kindly request the Divas to meet me tomorrow afternoon. I'll require your assistance in making the arrangements needed for their assignments to be carried out."

You'd glanced at the instructions written in her distinctively elegant script. "You're sending the Elite Four away, at this time, my lady…?

If you hadn't practically raised her, you would have missed her sigh. "Indulge my selfishness, Soroi. I don't have the fortitude to face the four of them while I lie indefinitely ill. More importantly, there's work that needs to be done, and it can't be done if they're fretting about an invalid."

"What about Ryuko-sama, my lady…?"

She'd smiled at the mention of her sister. "Ryuko will never take orders from me, so I'll have to tell her I've been called away."

"If I may be so bold, my lady, I think Ryuko-sama will demand more clarity than that."

There was no mistaking the sigh she made the second time around. "Family *is* demanding, isn't it, Soroi?"

You'd have ventured an answer, except she'd fallen asleep.

-------SANAGEYAMA UZU-------

It was the first time the four of you had assembled in the home she'd newly bought. One of the first things she'd done right after the crisis ended was to move out of her mother's house. The size of the new residence itself was modest, but the grounds surrounding it were immense.

She'd apologized for calling all of you so unceremoniously, then asked if you were all still willing to work under her command one final time. None of you, bar Gamagori of course, felt the need to respond to a blatantly rhetorical question.

She'd tasked each of you with different things: Gamagori with overseeing the closure of Honnouji Academy; Inumuta with the routing of any remaining REVOCS resistance;

Jakazure with supporting Rei in the recovery of her mother's company; and you with assisting in the reconstruction of Osaka City.

She'd smiled at you as if in apology. "I need you in Osaka to keep Takarada in line." (Jakuzure had been swift in voicing her approval: "Takes a monkey to rebuild a gorilla's cage." You'd been as quick to retort: "Takes a snake to handle a viper's nest." Things would have rapidly escalated if Lady Satsuki hadn't cleared her throat.)

"If everything's clear, then that's all for today. I'll be occupied…indefinitely, so proceed as you see fit. Needless to say, consult with each other every so often. It will make your tasks much easier to accomplish."

And just like that, you'd been dismissed. And even if the four of you had said nothing to each other, you'd found yourselves congregating half an hour later in a café you'd begun to frequent after the academy had been destroyed.

Jakuzure was the first to speak. "You sensed it too, didn't you?" She stared at you long and hard. "What did you see with your Shingantsu?" *

You'd shaken your head at her in reply. "Nothing I could identify with precision; just a vague sense that there's something…very wrong."

Gamagori grunted. "It's up to Inumuta then. He's hacking into the Kiryuin's central database now."

You'd waited while your team's resident genius practically melded with his laptop, brows furrowing and fingers flying. You heard his brief chortle of triumph—then watched the blood drain slowly from his face.

That was when the four of you made the frightening and impossible discovery that the indomitable Kiryuin Satsuki…was human after all.

-------GAMAGORI IRA-------

You'd reacted, as you always did, by shouting out in rage.

"As her Impenetrable Shield, I refuse to leave Lady Satsuki's side while Death hounds her with his scythe!"

"Idiot!" Jakuzure had turned to you with an uncharacteristic fury on her face. "Don't you get it? She can't deal with us knowing about it!"

You'd watched Sanageyama look at Jakuzure with a strange mixture of compassion and respect. "Jakuzure's right, Gamagori. And, we're the only ones who can do what Lady Satsuki wants done. The best way to serve her now is to honor her wishes."

You'd looked out the café window, the heaviness in your chest almost more than your strength could bear. "Then perhaps, at least, Inumuta can stay. He can help Iori find a cure for Lady Satsuki's condition."

Inumuta had shaken his head helplessly. "I can't gather information where none exists. We're dealing with an entirely unclassified autoimmune disease caused by prolonged human exposure to an alien biological system."

Jakuzure had interrupted quietly. "It was from wearing Junketsu and Senketsu, wasn't it?"

Inumuta had nodded somberly. "Unlike Matoi, Lady Satsuki wasn't genetically re-engineered to wear Kamui. Everything she managed to do with those God Robes she did from pure strength of will. In all the experiments Iori and I carried out, no one ever withstood wearing clothing with a 50 percent Life Fiber content. Lady Satsuki wore clothing made *purely* of Life Fibers for sustained periods of time—often in injurious conditions. If anything, it's a miracle that she's still alive."

"And we've seen her conjure one miracle after another in all our time together, haven't we Gamagori?" Sanageyama had spoken kindly, clapping a hand onto your shoulder. You'd nodded your head in agreement, then turned to Inumuta one final time.

"If things turn out for the worse while we're away…?"

"You'll all hear from me before it gets to that point," Inumuta had promised you gravely.

Jakuzure had sighed. "What will Satsuki-chan do about Matoi though? That delinquent won't take orders from her for sure."

You'd noticed the thoughtful look that flitted across Inumuta's face then. "At this point, I have the strangest feeling that Matoi's stubbornness…may be the only thing that can actually save Lady Satsuki's life."

You'd found yourself agreeing. "If Mankanshoku believes in Matoi, then I believe in her too."

"Great," you'd heard Jakuzure mutter, "We're entrusting the life of this world's savior in the hands of a delinquent on the endorsement of an underachiever. It's so stupid it has to work."

"And on that note," Inumuta had nodded, "So do we."

Image of the main Kill la Kill cast illustrated by artist Tadak.

Chapter End Notes

This second chapter continues the deconstruction of Kiryuin Satsuki that began in the previous chapter. In chapter one, we see Satsuki conceding the symbols of authority and power with the shedding of her previous hairstyle and uniform. In chapter two, we see her stripped of the physical invincibility that defined her persona for most of the show. By taking away these “identifiers” of Satsuki, we begin to encounter what, I suppose, one could call her “essential” self. What emerges is someone who’s not so radically different from the person we’ve already seen: she’s stoic, dignified, goal-oriented and pragmatic—and also painfully clearheaded about her vulnerabilities and weaknesses.

This chapter is also a tribute to the Elite Four and the love they bear for Satsuki. Their decision to play along with Satsuki’s duplicity reflects the extent of her influence on their way of thinking and doing (i.e., “no one else can do what we need to do”), and it’s also a choice that honors both the heart and the mind. In my opinion, it’s the kind of choice that followers—who also happen to be friends—make.

P.S. For those of you who may have forgotten, *Shingantsu* refers to Sanageyama Uzu's ability to enter a state of hyper-awareness with regards to his surroundings. It's the ability he develops after he has Iori sew his eyes shut.

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The Unraveling

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------KIRYUIN SATSUKI-------

You'd collapsed as soon they'd left your house; the pretense at normalcy had exhausted your final reserves of strength. Iori had encrypted all the data on your illness, but you knew that such codes presented no barrier to Inumuta's prodigious skills. But for the moment, at least, no matter how brief a moment it was, you didn't have to worry about managing the Divas.

Your sister, however, was an altogether different matter. It had been so, *so* easy to establish a routine with her, after a successful initial dinner with Soroi's "Signature Croquettes." Though you'd briefly considered having her move into your house, you'd eventually decided to leave the initiative in your younger sister's hands.

You'd started seeing each other almost every other night. Ryuko would come straight from school for dinner, and after a few evenings of light and inconsequential banter, you'd begun filling in the gaps in your knowledge of the other with a surprisingly pleasurable recital of personal facts and random trivia.

At one point, however, Ryuko had spotted a stack of board games in the living room, and her invitation to play was the first request from her that you'd actually refused.

Of course, she'd seen right through to your line of reasoning. "Aw, come on, Satsuki. You know that we're going to fight at some point. That's what sisters do."

You laughed at being caught so easily. "I know, Ryuko. I'm not running away from conflict. I just think that given our overly-developed sense of sibling rivalry, we should avoid competing against each other in the meanwhile." Then without really thinking, you'd added: "Think of it as a honeymoon of sorts."

She'd reddened then and stammered her agreement, and you thought at that moment that she was pretty when she blushed. That same night before leaving, she'd asked you if you were free the evening after.

"I'd like to be the one to do something for *us*…for a change," she said, suddenly unable to meet your eyes. "Can I take you out to dinner? It'll be a surprise."

You'd nodded without hesitating, though it meant demolishing your carefully constructed schedule. She arrived promptly the following evening on a motorbike with a massive hamper, and the sight of her in skintight jeans and raven black leather caused a shiver up your spine.

She'd been a little shy on seeing you, and sweet in her insistence on helping you put on your helmet. Contrary to what you'd expected, she'd driven carefully and even cautiously—though that hadn't deterred you from holding onto her more tightly than was needed.

She'd taken you high up into the mountains, eventually stopping at a clearing that afforded a view of both the sea and sky. For a moment, you'd had to stop and close your eyes because your throat and chest had unaccountably constricted. Then you'd opened your eyes and found yourself unable to speak, so you'd just looked at her instead.

"It's been three months to the day since we found out we were sisters," she'd said, her face turned up towards the stars. "I thought it would be nice to celebrate the occasion."

Once again there was that tightness, but you'd finally managed to find your voice. "Thank you, Ryuko" you'd told her softly. "I'm truly glad to have you as the sister I thought I'd lost." You'd meant it as you said it, but part of you was also strangely sad.

It was shortly after that evening that you'd begun feeling chronically ill and perennially exhausted. Contrary to what your family and friends believed though, you were no stranger to affliction. It was simply that no disease ever managed to withstand the power of your resolve.

But for the first time in your life, the strength of your will failed you, and the malaise progressed with so much rapidity that you were almost caught unprepared.

But you were the child of Kiryuin Ragyo, after all, and by the time Iori and Soroi discovered the full extent of your illness, you'd made arrangements for everyone who would be affected—except the person who probably mattered most. And, as if on cue, that was when Soroi knocked on your door and told you your sister had arrived.

You'd fervently hoped you had enough energy left to carry the final part of your plan out.

-------MATOI RYUKO-------

You'd known something was seriously wrong the minute you stepped through the door.

You'd noticed it for weeks now: the tremors in your sister's hands, the shadows on her cheeks, how she tired so, *so* quickly and easily, though no one else—apart from Soroi, perhaps—was around her often enough to see.

You'd nagged her of course, as indirectly as you could. Most times, you simply overstayed just to make sure she was going to bed instead of working late. Most times, she actually gave in to your demands, and it was her unexpected docility—more than the tremors, the shadows and the fatigue—that worried you the most.

"Ryuko," she'd said, and smiled at you in greeting, and you'd suddenly wondered when her slender face had become so thin.

“I have unpleasant news, I’m afraid,” she’d told you with an apologetic smile. “I have to be away for a while to manage some unexpected business, so I won’t be able to see you as often as I have.”

“What unexpected business?” you’d asked her with some puzzlement. Given all the time you’d spent together, you had a good grasp of the things she had to manage, and, as could only be expected of your sister, you knew she was managing them exceptionally well.

“I’d rather not go into details,” she’d responded with an evasiveness that reminded you all too much of the days when you’d fought each other.

“I get it if you can’t tell me,” you’d replied, though her sudden return to secretiveness had hurt. “But can it at least wait until you’re better?”

It was the first time you’d directly confronted her about her uncharacteristic lack of vigor, and as soon as you’d said the words, a sickening realization began to dawn.

“You *are* going to get better, aren’t you…?” you’d asked her in a whisper, and the way she’d smiled at you had caused an unaccountable constriction in your throat and chest.

“I’m sorry, Ryuko.” She’d stood then and moved towards you, and when she swayed your eyes had widened at the uncommon sight. Then you’d caught her just in time, your fingers trembling, and that was when you’d shouted for Soroi to come.

-------SOROI MITSUZO-------

She’d gazed straight at you, a look of implacable determination on her face—the same look you’d seen on your mistress’s face countless times in the past thirteen years.

“Dismiss the team, Soroi,” she’d told you simply. “No one touches my sister but you, Iori and me.”

You’d already made arrangements with the best nursing staff available, but the tone of her voice brooked no dissent. And just like that, she’d taken command of her sister’s care with a certainty and conviction that mirrored your mistress’s own. She’d asked your help in informing the Mankanshokus and then made arrangements for an indefinite leave from school. Then she’d drawn up a schedule of shifts for you, for her and for Iori, and ended the day by asking for all the available literature on Satsuki-sama’s condition.

In the days that passed, she read voraciously while her sister slept, and though she barely rested, her attentiveness never flagged. She sponged her sister through her burning fevers and held her in her brutal chills. Something about her fierce and tender devotion caused an unaccountable constriction in your throat and chest.

You realized in the week that followed that you trusted her with your mistress’s life. While you knew that many would gladly die for Satsuki-sama, that’s precisely what had troubled

you for years: that they would die for her, and *could* die for her, and far too easily too. No one had been strong enough to protect your mistress, though she'd used her strength to protect the world.

But Ryuko-sama *was* stronger than your mistress, infused with the same Life Fibers that had sapped her sister's strength. This fierce, stubborn and black-haired child could actually protect the person you treasured most, and the knowledge brought you a feeling of peace you hadn't felt since you'd first laid eyes on a five-year old girl.

For the first time since your mistress's diagnosis, you actually saw a ray of hope.

Image *of Soroi and Satsuki illustrated by artist* ***71***.

Chapter End Notes

Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Stitching

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------MATOI RYUKO-------

You hadn't meant to enter the room without permission, but days of sleep deprivation had left you disoriented. You'd stopped, puzzled, because you knew the three people who lived in your sister's house, and the room clearly belonged to none of them.

It had been carefully furnished in sage and lilac hues; the shelves featured an odd assortment of titles and the wardrobe a selection of differently-sized clothes. A glint of silver on the dressing table caught your eye and you found yourself fingering an exquisitely crafted bracelet.

You'd nearly jumped when Soroi spoke behind you.

"She bought a gift for you every year since she was five—on a day she fancied was your birthday. That bracelet was for when you turned sixteen. Those were the only times she indulged her grief—the only times she gave in to what she referred to as 'useless sentimentality'."

"You mean, these books, these clothes, this jewelry…all of this was for me?"

"She was—and still is—a kind and generous soul, Ryuko-sama. She became who she became and she did what she did because anything less would have meant losing to her mother."

"And I hated her for it," you'd whispered. "I hated her arrogance. I hated her air of superiority. I hated her sense of entitlement. But even Senketsu understood her when I couldn't—even Senketsu said she was strong."

"Satsuki-sama doesn't have that strength now, Ryuko-sama. You'll have to lend her yours."

It had struck you at that moment how meager your sister's "entitlement" had been: how she'd lost both father and sister in a moment's revelation; how'd she spent the years that followed plotting against her mother; how she'd waged a campaign that had not only earned her the hostility of the very people she sought to save but had also literally destroyed her body from the inside.

"My strength is hers, Soroi. And I'll use whatever's left to make up for everything she's lost or never had."

The old butler had shaken his head. "Satsuki-sama has never been the kind to wallow in the past or dither in the present. The most precious thing you can give her—the only thing I ask you to give her, if I may be so bold—is the gift of a future."

But how on earth, you'd asked yourself then, were you supposed to do that?

-------IORI SHIRO-------

Two weeks had passed since Satsuki-sama's collapse, and despite your combined efforts, she was steadily getting worse.

"It's her heart," you'd told Ryuko-sama and your uncle wearily. "It's been strained too much and it's slowly giving out."

"What about a transplant?" Ryuko-sama had asked you, the tension evident in her voice.

"Even if we manage to find a donor, Satsuki-sama won't survive a transplant—not with her body in its current state. And even if a cardiac transplant did succeed, she'd have fifteen years left to live at most."

You'd all sat together in a grim and despairing silence. Then Ryuko-sama had suddenly spoken, the tone of her voice strangely flat.

"What if you were to transplant my Life Fibers, Iori? What if you took some of the threads around my heart and bound them around my sister's?"

The idea had struck you as startling in its ingenuity, but you'd already begun to shake your head. "Impossible, Ryuko-sama. Your father—Dr. Matoi—tried and failed to do precisely that when your sister was an infant."

"Not precisely, Iori. He was transplanting Life Fibers that were completely alien. My Life Fibers are my own—they're spliced into my genes. And I'm Satsuki's younger sister."

"Which means," you'd reasoned thoughtfully, "that you share at least half of her genetic material; which means, in turn, that the likelihood of rejection becomes significantly reduced."

"Exactly," she'd nodded. "And if the Life Fibers take her as a host, it'll be in their best interests that she stays alive."

You'd looked at her with newly-heightened respect. "It just might work, Ryuko-sama."

Your uncle had already begun to leave the room. "I'll make the needed arrangements at the Kiryuin Medical Facility."

"Iori," Ryuko-sama had called you back, a strange mix of resolve and dread written on her face. "You'll have to keep me conscious when you put me under the knife."

"But…why, Ryuko-sama?" you'd asked, astounded by her request.

“The Fibers are at their strongest when their host’s life is in mortal danger. If I stay awake through the procedure, the trauma will activate my Life Fibers’ full potential—which will give my sister a better chance.”

You’d stared at her slightly horrified. “But the pain, Ryuko-sama…”

She’d looked away and smiled. “I can bear a torn chest better than a broken heart, Iori. Life without my sister doesn’t interest me that much.”

You’d bowed your head then, partly out of admiration and partly in acquiescence. “As you wish then, Ryuko-sama.”

-------SOROI MITSUZO-------

You’d known, even as you’d helped your nephew anesthetize your mistress, how likely the operation was to fail. But this was how life had always been with the older Kiryuin sister; you’d often wondered how you’d managed to bear the strain.

You’d looked with tenderness at the younger Kiryuin. You needed no further proof of her devotion to your mistress after this.

She’d gasped when Iori made the first incision, and you’d been tempted to look away. But the least you could do was watch and be her witness, and so you’d watched as her knuckles whitened, as the sweat ran down her brow, as she ground her teeth against the moans that reverberated in her throat.

“It’s working, Ryuko-sama,” you’d heard Iori reassure her quietly. “Your Life Fibers are regenerating rapidly. I’ll harvest as many as I can then close you up.”

“Don’t…” she’d spoken hoarsely, her eyes screwed shut against the pain. “Don’t stitch me up…right away…Iori. You might need more Fibers…than you think…”

And so you’d watched your nephew, your mistress and her sister labor for nearly three quarters of an hour. Iori’s hands never faltered, though the beeps that sounded Ryuko-sama’s heart began to lose their steady and stolid pace.

“Iori,” you’d spoken to him softly. “Ryuko-sama won’t hold out much longer.”

“Just five more minutes,” your nephew had replied through gritted teeth. “I need enough Fibers to salvage the remains of Satsuki-sama’s heart.”

When Iori had finally sewn up Ryuko-sama’s chest, her breathing had become ragged and shallow enough to incite your nephew’s concern.

“Don’t…worry…about…me,” she’d wheezed through whitened lips. “Save…my…sister… Iori…Only Honnouji Academy’s…former…Sewing Club President…can stitch those

fibers…around…her heart."

You saw the tears that suddenly glistened in Iori's eyes. "I won't fail, Ryuko-sama."

But you could tell from the monitor's protracted beeps that your mistress's heart was weakening far too quickly. You saw the agonized look on your nephew's face.

"The Fibers are rooting, Oji-sama," he'd whispered urgently. "But they're just…disappearing into the muscle."

Another quarter of an hour passed during which time the silence grew progressively longer between the beats of your mistress's heart. And then the sound you'd all been dreading finally arrived as a curiously dull and insistent beep...

The moment would have stretched forever, if her weakened voice hadn't broken the spell.

"…Hang on, Satsuki…"

You and Iori had started—you'd both assumed that she'd lost consciousness after your nephew had closed her chest.

"…Hang on…"

You were the one who saw it—her fingers moving under the sheet, reaching for her sister's hand.

As quickly as you could, you'd wheeled their beds together, and seen the younger Kiryuin's hand fiercely enclose her sister's.

Two impossibly long moments later, the other monitor began to blip: faintly at first, then slowly stronger, until it eventually matched the other heart's tattoo.

For the first time in over two weeks, your mistress's blue eyes had fluttered open.

You'd heard the younger one's tender whisper: "*Okaeri*, Satsuki."

You'd heard the older one's soft reply: "*Tadaima*, Ryuko."

It was only then that you finally allowed the tears to fall.

Image *of Satsuki and Ryuko illustrated by artist* ***Aconitea****.*

Chapter End Notes

Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Severing (Version 1)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------KIRYUIN SATSUKI-------

You dreamt.

You were cold and you were falling.

It was dark. You were freezing. You'd been falling without end. You can barely remember what life was like before the cold, before the dark and before the perpetual descending.

Then in the darkness, a strand of red snaked into your vision. It gently wove around you, followed by one more strand, and then another. The strands were warm and they felt familiar. As they twined and coalesced around you, you felt some of the chill leave your bones.

It felt good to lie in that cocoon of crimson silk. It felt good to lay your head and rest.

You realized at that moment that you could have gone on falling. Your presence was no longer required. There was no trace of self-pity in this conclusion. It was a statement of simple fact. The people you'd left behind could carry on the work still needed.

It meant that you could finally rest. And you wanted so, so *badly to finally and completely rest.*

Then you heard a voice. The voice was warm, and it felt familiar, and it echoed words that you may have said in your life before the dark.

Then you saw a pair of eyes: eyes the same blue shade as yours, eyes as tired as yours, eyes aged and wearied by years of untold loneliness just like yours. Hang on*, the eyes said.* Hang on*, the eyes pleaded.*

And that's when it hit you. You weren't needed, but you were wanted*, and the owner of that familiar voice and those familiar eyes was waiting somewhere beyond the dark—somewhere you could go to if you followed the threads that bound your heart.*

It was reason enough for you to come back.

You'd woken up to find her in the bed right next to yours, and you'd nearly bolted upright when you realized she was also hooked to tubes.

"Please relax, Satsuki-sama. Your body's been through a tremendous amount of strain."

You'd sunk back into your pillows, suddenly too tired to speak, but Iori had anticipated exactly what you'd wanted to know.

"She's recovering nicely, Satsuki-sama; even the scars from her incision are nearly gone. She's sleeping as much from the exhaustion of the last two weeks as she is from the rigors of the surgery."

"Surgery…?" You managed to breathe out, a single eyebrow raised in question.

"You nearly died, Satsuki-sama. Your heart had grown so weak. Your sister suggested that we transplant Life Fibers from her heart to yours. Even with the reduction in the risk of rejection, the operation nearly failed. It was Ryuko-sama's timely…intervention that allowed the transplantation to succeed."

You'd closed your eyes then, and despite your weakness, your mind quickly grasped the implications. To ensure their own survival, the Life Fibers inside your body would rework your physiology from the inside out and make you virtually indestructible—assuming no belated rejection, that is.

You'd smiled then in admiration and amusement. Classic Ryuko: she'd found a way to worm herself into your heart both figuratively *and* literally. The same human blood flowed through your veins; now the same alien threads bound your hearts.

It seemed fate was determined to bind you together.

-------MATOI RYUKO-------

"She's still very weak, and although she's not in immediate danger, her body may still reject the Fibers."

A week had passed since your sister's emergency surgery, and you, Iori and Soroi were seated around the dining table. No scars remained from your role in the transplantation, and even your memories of the pain had begun to fade.

"The thing is…" and Iori hesitated, "…the Life Fibers don't seem to have integrated Satsuki-sama's genetic material. Her body's not rejecting them, but it's not assimilating them either. In Kamui terms, it's better than Life Fiber Override without quite being Life Fiber Synchronize. It's a neurophysiological standoff—for reasons I'm not quite clear about."

You'd nodded, slightly worried, but you all felt far more optimistic overall. Satsuki still spent the vast majority of her time asleep rather than awake, but in many ways, her distinct lack of consciousness made her easier to nurse.

The truth was, you'd always been a modest child, and caring for the very ill involved—as you'd quickly learned—dispensing of any awkwardness entailed in close and frequent contact with naked skin. While it had been challenging in the beginning, you'd learned how

to bathe and groom your sister *with your gaze averted* with an adroitness that would have impressed a fully trained nurse.

And ever since her wounds had closed (always a rapid process when the Life Fibers were involved), you'd started taking her to the private spring adjoining her garden, for the sheer pleasure it afforded as opposed to the tactile monotony of sponging. You'd wrap the both of you in towels, and once she was in the water, you'd alternate between gently massaging her body and carefully mobilizing her limbs.

It was so faint in the beginning that you almost overlooked it. But it happened so consistently that it couldn't escape your notice.

She'd shiver when you washed her anywhere near her collarbone, on her flanks and down the inside of her thighs. It was days before you began to realize what the pattern of her reactions meant. Despite the warmth of the hot spring's waters, you'd broken out into a cold sweat. Memories that you'd suppressed returned to your mind unbidden: images of your mother and your half-alien sister running their hands over your naked skin, pausing at your collarbone, at your flanks, on the region between your legs, on everything in between…

You'd stared at your sister's inert form then, a look of horror dawning on your face, as you began to grasp the full extent of what she'd had to endure for years. The magnitude of it broke your heart so much that you'd spent that night sobbing into your pillow—grieving for the sister who'd lost her innocence again, and again, and again.

-------KIRYUIN SATSUKI-------

You'd woken up to find her staring at you, the concern evident in her cobalt blue eyes.

"How long…have I been sleeping?" you'd asked her, and nearly winced at her reply.

"A little over two weeks. It did you a lot of good."

You'd sunk back into your pillows and realized after a moment that your younger sister was right. "I do feel considerably stronger," you told her. "But what does Iori say?"

"He says your body's stable but at a…stalemate. Your body's not rejecting my Fibers, but it's not welcoming them either."

You'd smiled and shaken your head. "It's been months since the war ended, and I still can't wear Kamui. Some things don't change or can't ever change, it seems. What matters in the end is that I'm actually still alive."

She'd paused then. "Iori calls it a 'neurophysiological standoff'…I think I might have figured out the cause."

You'd looked at her then but she suddenly seemed unable to meet your eyes. After a moment's hesitation, she began to speak.

"When…when mother forced me to wear Junketsu…sometime shortly after I'd begun to lose my mind…she and Nui…she and Nui…they…"

You'd immediately grasped what she was trying to say, and you almost couldn't speak from the impossible constriction in your throat and chest.

"Satsuki…" she'd looked at you, her blue eyes pleading (eyes the same cobalt shade as yours, eyes as tired as yours, eyes aged and wearied by a mother's abuse just like yours). "Did she…did they…?"

You'd closed your eyes then, the heaviness in your chest almost more than your Fiber-infused heart could bear.

"It started when I turned 13," you said quietly, "on the day I became a woman. There was no point in telling anyone because there was no one who could help. But I'd been reading psychiatry books since I was 8, so I knew enough not to indulge the stories—not to give in to the thoughts that I deserved it, or was worthless, or was dirty and damaged goods."

"I don't mean to say that it was easy. But it got easier over time. And in a very important way, it *did* make my task easier—because it made me hate her so much more."

You'd stopped as abruptly as you'd started, startled by the sight of the tears that had started streaming down her face. She'd reached out for you then and held you, and the nakedness of her anguish allowed you to feel—perhaps for the first time in your life—the staggering enormity of your pain and grief.

After thirteen long and terrible years, you finally allowed the tears to fall.

-------MATOI RYUKO-------

The sound of her crying broke your heart, but you made no attempt to stop her tears. Even if your chest burned and burned and burned, you knew that you had to hold it: you knew that you had to hold her grief and yours, because this was the catharsis she'd been denied for far too many lonely years.

She cried and cried and cried: gut-wrenching, nerve-wracking, soul-rending cries, the flood of her tears soaking through her shirt and yours. And you held her close, and stroked her back, and kissed her hair, and hoped against hope that a day's lamentation would be enough to cleanse more than a decade of pain and loneliness and abuse.

She stopped at moments, then started again, and you held her tightly all throughout, until at some point in the late hours of the evening, exhaustion kicked in and she fell asleep.

And despite the fact that you were on the verge of collapse as well, you'd changed her clothes and tucked her in—and after a moment's hesitation, slipped underneath her covers and held her to your chest.

The next day, while your sister slept, Iori accosted you in the hallway with an incredulous grin. "I have no idea exactly what happened, but Satsuki-sama's blood test this morning showed incredible results! Her body and the Life Fibers have finally begun the process of fully integrating! It's as if a huge block in her system was suddenly released!"

You'd simply grinned and high-fived Iori. For some reason, his news had come as no surprise.

Image *of Ryuko and Satsuki illustrated by artist* ***Hatutaro****.*

Chapter End Notes

This was a wrenching but necessary chapter to write. I think that any work that seriously tries to take Satsuki's story forward has to deal with the history of her abuse. She's such a brilliantly strong character that it's easy to think of her as acting as her own psychiatrist. But trauma has an embodied aspect and it can't be fully healed on just a narrative level (what Satsuki refers to as "not indulging in the stories" of victimhood). Ryuko—who in many ways is closer to the body and more connected to her instincts and emotions than her more cerebral sister—intuits this and realizes that her sister has a psychosomatic block that prevents her full physical recovery. Satsuki has to witness her sister's grief on her behalf first before she realizes that it's okay for her to feel her pain. Unsurprisingly, fully acknowledging the abuse that she suffered—as opposed to stoically enduring it—is what finally allows her to heal.

And yes, that concludes most (if not all) of the drama in this story. Now things can really start lightening up. X-D

P.S. Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Severing (Version 2)

Chapter Notes

> This isn't a new chapter but an alternate rendering of the previous one. After reviewing the story, it struck me that the way I wrote *The Severing* didn't feel completely right. Although the narrative was coherent, the characterization was slightly off. It's not Ryuko's style to grieve (she just gets really mad) and it's not Satsuki's style to grieve either (she just doesn't, period). While I'd originally planned to just revise the chapter entirely, I realized that some readers actually like it just the way it is. So as a compromise, I'm keeping the original chapter with its off key characterization AND adding a new one which I think is more in keeping with how Ryuko and Satsuki would actually behave. The good news is: both versions work with the later chapters of the story, so nothing gets really lost. (You could also tell me what you think!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

-------KIRYUIN SATSUKI-------

You dreamt.

You were cold and you were falling.

It was dark. You were freezing. You'd been falling without end. You can barely remember what life was like before the cold, before the dark and before the perpetual descending.

Then in the darkness, a strand of red snaked into your vision. It gently wove around you, followed by one more strand, and then another. The strands were warm and they felt familiar. As they twined and coalesced around you, you felt some of the chill leave your bones.

It felt good to lie in that cocoon of crimson silk. It felt good to lay your head and rest.

You realized at that moment that you could have gone on falling. Your presence was no longer required. There was no trace of self-pity in this conclusion. It was a statement of simple fact.

It meant that you could finally rest. And you wanted so, so *badly to finally and completely rest.*

Then you heard a voice. The voice was warm, and it felt familiar, and it echoed words that you may have said in your life before the dark.

Then you saw a pair of eyes: eyes the same blue shade as yours, eyes as tired as yours, eyes aged and wearied by years of loneliness just like yours. Hang on*, the eyes said.* Hang on*, the eyes pleaded.*

And that's when it hit you. You weren't needed, but you were wanted*, and the owner of that familiar voice and those familiar eyes was waiting somewhere beyond the dark—somewhere you could go to if you followed the threads that bound your heart.*

It was reason enough for you to come back.

You'd woken up to find her in the bed right next to yours, and you'd nearly bolted upright when you realized she was also hooked to tubes.

"Please relax, Satsuki-sama. Your body's been through a tremendous amount of strain."

You'd sunk back into your pillows, suddenly too tired to speak, but Iori had anticipated exactly what you'd wanted to know.

"She's recovering nicely, Satsuki-sama; even the scars from her incision are nearly gone. She's sleeping as much from the exhaustion of the last two weeks as she is from the rigors of the surgery."

"Surgery…?" You'd managed to breathe out, a single eyebrow raised in question.

"You nearly died, Satsuki-sama. Your heart had grown so weak. Your sister suggested that we transplant Life Fibers from her heart to yours. Even with the reduction in the risk of rejection, the operation nearly failed. It was Ryuko-sama's timely…intervention that allowed the transplantation to succeed."

You'd closed your eyes then, and despite your weakness, your mind had quickly grasped the implications. To ensure their own survival, the Life Fibers would rework your physiology from the inside out and make you virtually indestructible—assuming no belated rejection, that is.

You'd smiled then in admiration and amusement. Classic Ryuko: she'd found a way to worm herself into your heart both figuratively *and* literally. The same human blood flowed through your veins; now the same alien threads bound your hearts.

It seemed fate was determined to bind you together.

-------MATOI RYUKO-------

"She's still very weak, and although she's not in immediate danger, I suggest we keep her sedated to avoid the risk of over-exertion."

A week had passed since your sister's emergency surgery, and you, Iori and Soroi were seated around the dining table. No scars remained from your role in the transplantation, and even your memories of the pain had begun to fade.

Although you disliked having to drug your sister, you knew that none of you could restrain her without physically coming to blows (you'd actually woken up from the surgery to find her *sitting* next to your bed). Plus, even if you'd never have admitted it, your sister's distinct lack of consciousness made her far easier to nurse.

The truth was that you'd always been a modest child, and caring for the ill involved prolonged and frequent contact with an uncomfortable amount of naked skin. It had been challenging enough to bathe and groom your unconscious sister while keeping your eyes averted—you couldn't imagine being able to do the same if she actually stayed awake.

And ever since her wounds had closed (always a rapid process when the Life Fibers were involved), you'd started taking her to the private spring adjoining her garden, for the sheer pleasure it afforded as opposed to the tactile monotony of sponging. You'd wrap the both of you in towels, and once she was in the water, you'd alternate between gently massaging her body and carefully mobilizing her limbs.

It was so faint in the beginning that you almost overlooked it. But it happened so consistently that it eventually caught your eye.

She'd shiver when you washed her anywhere near her collarbone, on her flanks and down the inside of her thighs. It was days before you began to realize what the pattern of her reactions meant. Despite the warmth of the hot spring's waters, you'd broken out into a cold sweat. Memories that you'd suppressed returned to your mind unbidden: images of your mother and your half-alien sister running their hands over your naked skin, pausing at your collarbone, at your flanks, in the region between your legs, on everything in between…

You'd stared at your sister's inert form then, a look of horror dawning on your face, as you began to grasp the full extent of what she'd had to endure for years. That was when the rage hit you: a futile, useless and impotent rage because the dead couldn't suffer—even if the ones left behind did.

-------KIRYUIN SATSUKI-------

You'd woken up to find her staring at you, the concern evident in her cobalt blue eyes.

"How long…have I been sleeping?" you'd asked her, and nearly winced at her reply.

"A little over two weeks. It did you a lot of good."

You'd sunk back into your pillows and realized after a moment that your younger sister was right. "I do feel considerably stronger," you'd told her. "But what does Iori say?"

“He says your body’s slowly integrating the Fibers. It’s taking much longer than he expected, but at least the…assimilation’s taking place.”

You’d smiled and shaken your head. “Either I’m resisting your Fibers or your Fibers are resisting me. Even on a genetic level, we don’t manage to hit it off right away, do we?”

“Mmm…” she’d simply answered, a look of distraction on her face.

“What’s bothering you, Ryuko?” you’d asked her gently. She turned to face you but seemed unable to meet your eyes. After a moment’s hesitation, she began to speak.

“While I…while I was…bathing you these last two weeks…I couldn’t help noticing that…you’d react...that your body would react…in certain ways.”

You’d frozen for a moment, then asked in a carefully neutral voice. “Did you sponge me when you bathed me? Or did you take me to the spring?”

She hesitated again. “It only happened in the hot spring.”

A moment of silence passed between the both of you. Then she spoke again.

“Satsuki…” she’d looked at you, and this time her deep blue eyes met yours. “Our mother…and maybe even Nui…what did our mother do to you?”

You’d closed your eyes then, as a massive and entirely understandable constriction seized your throat and chest. It had never crossed your mind that anyone else would ever know.

You opened your eyes and looked at her, and something in those eyes the same blue shade as yours gave you the fortitude to find your voice.

“It started when I turned 13,” you said quietly, “on the day I became a woman. She called it a purification ritual—though there was nothing pure about what she did. She did it with me and she did it with Nui, though I suspect she enjoyed toying with me so much more. She did it wherever she felt like doing it, but she particularly enjoyed doing it in her private spring.” You’d paused then and looked at her, the tone of your voice strangely flat.

“No one knew except me, Nui and Ragyo. I didn’t tell anyone because there was no who could have helped. I knew enough not to indulge the stories—not to give in to the thoughts that I deserved it, or was worthless, or was dirty and damaged goods. I’m not saying it was easy, but it did get easier over time…”

“I…I get it, Satsuki,” she’d said, after a long and painful pause. “I get it because…Ragyo and Nui…they did it to me too…when I lost my mind…when she forced me to wear Junketsu…”

You’d looked at her in horror. “Ryuko, I—“

She’d cut you off quickly. “I’m not…I’m not trying to make this about me. What I went through for a day can’t remotely compare to what you went through for years. What I wanted was to just let you know that…that there’s someone who understands—even if just a little bit—what going through *that* was like...”

She'd shaken her head at herself in frustration. "I'm not saying it all that well, and it really doesn't make a difference in the end, but I just wanted you to know…I just wanted you to know that you're not…alone. You're not alone anymore, Satsuki, because you've got me and I *know*."

You'd stared at her, unable to speak for a moment, your throat and chest constricting for entirely different reasons.

"But it does make a difference, Ryuko," you'd spoken softly, feeling your constant and terrible sense of isolation receding just a tiny bit. "It makes a *world* of difference."

The shy and crooked grin on her face had told you that it was all she'd needed to hear.

Image *of Ryuko illustrated by artist* ***Cherinova****.*

Chapter End Notes

Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Quilting

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------MANKANSHOKU SUKUYO-------

You'd dropped everything when you'd gotten the call—including the leg of the patient whose bones your husband had been trying to set—thrilled to have finally heard from the child you'd long considered as one of your own.

She was going to be free for a day, she'd said, and was asking if she could visit.

Of course, you'd trilled, your eyes rolling in their sockets. Family *never* asked if they could visit; they just showed up and ate everything in sight.

You could hear the smile in her voice when she said goodbye. You'd only remembered after you hung up that Mako was out on a field trip and wouldn't be back for days.

Oh well, you'd shrugged, and turned to your larder. The prosperity of the city you'd moved to meant that it was getting harder and harder to put the mystery in croquettes these days.

She'd been disappointed to find that Mako was out when she arrived, but was more than content to sit at your dining table and eat. You'd thought to yourself that she'd become a little pale and a little slender—and certainly far more elegant and refined. At odd moments when she turned away in profile, it even startled you to see her sister.

But you could tell that she was happy, even if she looked tired and thin. Her face softened whenever she spoke of her sister, and you wondered if she even knew.

"Why don't you just move in with Satsuki-sama, Ryuko-chan? You're part of the Mankanshoku family, true, but we've had you longer than your biological sister, and sharing is what families *do*."

She'd looked taken aback by your suggestion, and the crimson blush on her cheeks confirmed what your maternal sense had long ago intuited.

"Why do I get the feeling," she'd said, suspicion furrowing her brow, "that you're somehow encouraging me to do something that isn't exactly…right?"

"What's wrong with being in lo—with loving your sister?" you'd asked. "That's what families do too."

"Sukuyo-san," she sighed, "my own mother threw me away. My father abandoned my mother. My sister killed my father. Then my *other* sister and I nearly killed each other. And

then we decided to work together to kill our mother and our sister. Frankly, I don't have a biologically-based sense of what families are about."

"But *I* do," you'd replied tartly, "so *you* should listen to *me*. Ryuko-chan, I'm telling you: go and live with Satsuki-sama. It's the right thing to do."

She'd looked at you doubtfully, then slowly nodded her head.

"Sukuyo-san…" she'd hesitated, just when she was about to leave. "I…I never got to say tha —"

"What are you blathering about, Ryuko-chan?" you'd tut-tutted as you shoved her out. "This isn't a goodbye, you silly girl. It's just what—"

"Yes, yes," she'd rolled her eyes. "It's just what families do. Anyway, see you soon, Sukuyo-san! And give my regards to Mako, Mataro and Barazo-san."

You'd stood at your door, rapidly blinking, thinking dumbly that perhaps now you'd stocked too many croquettes, when your husband's voice rumbled somewhere to your left.

"They're sisters, Sukuyo-chan. Shouldn't you be discouraging her from this?"

"It's not like they're going to produce defective children, Anata. And those two have been through so much. No one else will understand them the way they understand each other."

"Spoken with the sagacity of a *sennin*, my dear. You certainly have a way of putting things into perspective."

"I have to," you'd replied sweetly, "Or I'd go insane with an unlicensed doctor for a husband, an underachiever for a daughter and a pickpocket for a son. Speaking of which—where the hell did Mataro go???"

-------MATOI RYUKO-------

You'd known for a while that you wanted to live with her—you just weren't sure if it was right. In the entire history of your interactions with your sister, you'd gone through the whole gamut of human emotions: from hatred and hostility, to respect and camaraderie, to affection and (yes, you'd long ago admitted it), to an attachment that you couldn't quite…define.

While you were pretty sure it was normal for you to love your sister, you doubted that fantasizing about her was normal too. It didn't help that Satsuki made for overwhelmingly fantasy-like material—with her impossibly long legs, beguilingly soft skin and enigmatic blue eyes. You suddenly remembered the morning when you'd knocked on her door, and she'd answered wearing a nightie that started much too low and ended far too high, and the sight of all that bare skin combined with the husky sound of her voice to ignite a distinctly un-sisterly…*warmth*.

You'd felt guilty in the beginning, of course, but the pragmatism that ran in your veins quickly quelled any thoughts of shame. You'd reasoned that it was far better to fantasize about your sister than to inadvertently act those fantasies out from the sheer pressure of suppressed pubescent impulses.

What saved you, and what kept saving you, at the end of each day, was the genuine core of tenderness that lay underneath the yearning—the tenderness that had come to the fore easily enough when she'd lain ill for weeks and you'd cared for her without pause.

You'd known then, with a conviction that you hadn't possessed after your rampages with the Kamui, that no matter how much you desired your sister you could still trust yourself to *behave*—because you cared for her that much (and possibly by so much more).

Still, it didn't make living with her—and the fact of wanting her—any bit easier.

-------KIRYUIN SATSUKI-------

You're not sure when it started, though you now suspect it began long before, but you remember a beginning of sorts when you caught her staring at you across the waters, her arms around your waist, on one of the very few occasions that your sedatives had failed to work.

You'd looked into her eyes (those mesmerizing eyes the same blue shade as yours), with the distinctly shaped irises that revealed her alien genes. She was human enough though to betray her desire—you could see it in her dilated pupils, in the flush on her cheeks, in the accelerated rise and fall of her towel-wrapped chest. You could tell that she was trying to control herself, and while her restraint had made you proud, it had also strangely made you sad.

You'd realized then that your sister, Ryuko, was in love with you, and you'd wondered if this predisposition for wanting one's own blood could be part of your shared Kiryuin legacy.

For some reason though, it was the only part of your legacy that didn't feel like a curse—not anymore; at least not with *her*.

And maybe that was why you began to deliberately provoke her: to find ways to draw out the desire that lay underneath the tenderness. You took to wearing nightgowns that started far too low and ended much too high, and addressing her in tones of voice designed to spark the most un-sisterly warmth, and just like the gentleman that your sister was, she never acted inappropriately (not even once) though you watched her struggle every single day.

And in spite of the struggle, and in the face of the many provocations you purposely engineered, she came to you one day and asked: would it be fine if she moved in? And the way she'd asked, and how she couldn't look you in the eye, had caused an entirely understandable constriction in your throat and chest. That she'd picked *you* over the

Mankanshokus—*and* the daily agony of an impossible desire—was one more gift she'd granted you on top of a future you'd almost never had.

Then one day, when you were so much stronger, the scars from your chest completely gone, you'd both lain in the garden and she'd automatically reached down to carry you when you'd said that it was time to go.

"It's fine, Ryuko!" you'd laughed as you protested. Tilting your head towards her arms, you'd gently said: "It's no longer necessary."

She'd paused then, and then you felt her arms tighten around your waist.

"Not necessary for *you*, maybe, Satsuki." The sadness in her voice when she said this made you pause and look up towards her face.

She'd gotten thinner from the weeks of caring for you continuously, and her hair with its crimson streak had grown long and wavy too. It occurred to you then that your sister was strikingly and *shockingly* beautiful and you suddenly found it hard to breathe.

Only one human being in the world had ever incited your impulsiveness. Only one human being in the world had ever made you indulge in useless sentiment.

You'd looked up at her as the sunlight framed her face and the moment was just so utterly and completely perfect that all that was left for you to do was to twine your arms around her neck and bring her lips to yours.

Image *of Ryuko and Satsuki illustrated by artist* ***Yorukun***.

Chapter End Notes

Just for those of you who don't want to have to look it up, a *sennin* is an immortal, mage, sage or hermit. The *sennin* appears quite frequently in Japanese art and mythology.

P.S. Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Knotting

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------MATOI RYUKO-------

When she'd reached up and kissed you, your mind had literally stopped. Then your heart had begun to beat so fast that you were suddenly glad for the Fibers that reinforced your core. For the first time since you'd known about your alien genes, you regretted remaining human enough to need to breathe. The idea of moving away from her lips for something as trivial as respiration occurred to you as outrageously absurd.

You'd broken away first, your body overwhelmed by the unexpected amount of sensory stimulation. She'd looked up at you in amusement, and without a sign of strain or a word of warning, flipped you over (head under feet) and promptly knocked the breath out of you for the second time in less than three minutes.

"It really is so much easier to control things when you're on top," she'd murmured before covering your mouth again. You remembered thinking (in the brief moment that thought still remained) that the only time submission had felt remotely as good was when you'd surrendered your will to Junketsu (and that memory paled so much in comparison to your sister's kiss that it really didn't deserve being considered as a benchmark of sorts).

She was the one who'd broken off your second kiss, and all you could say in your dazed and disoriented state was: "Yes, definitely *not* an invalid any longer, should tell Iori that."

Then the full import of what she'd done had dawned on you and you'd stared at her in shock.

"Did you…did we…did you and I just do what I think we did?"

"And what do you think we did, Ryuko?"

You found it hard to think straight when she looked at you the way she did.

"I'm not exactly sure…but it didn't seem like the kind of thing that normal sisters do."

She'd smiled at you and all you could suddenly think about was the moisture on her lips. "You think I'd let convention stop me from getting what I want?"

"It's not *just* a convention…" you'd begun to argue, then stopped when the rest of what she'd said sank in. "Hang on. You *want* me? You want *me*?"

"Yes, I want *you*, Ryuko." She'd said simply. "And, I know you want me too."

“But…but it’s not right!” you’d protested weakly, not even bothering to deny her charge. “There are laws and taboos against this sort of thing!”

“To prevent the tragic consequences of inbreeding, yes, I know, Ryuko. But I seriously doubt we’re going to get each other pregnant, regardless of how…vigorous we may eventually get.”

The blatant allusion to intimacy nearly made you choke.

“You know it’s not that simple,” you’d rebutted, surprised to find yourself behaving as the voice of reason for a change. “You might be headstrong enough to ignore convention, but you can’t change a simple fact.”

“I can’t change facts, that’s true,” she’d conceded. “But altering reality is easy enough for me. I *am* Kiryuin Satsuki, after all.”

“Don’t go cryptic and high-and-mighty on me,” you’d said exasperated. “You may be a mutant now just like me and Nui, but it doesn’t give you the power to change what’s real—”

“I had Inumuta destroy all evidence of our relationship by blood.”

You’d paused in the middle of your tirade and blinked. “You *what*?”

“I can’t change the fact that we’re sisters, Ryuko, but reality is built with the bricks of proof. If you can change or destroy the bricks, you can change or destroy what’s real.”

“People aren’t bricks, Satsuki. You can’t wipe out what’s in people’s heads.”

“I don’t need to. The people who know about us happen to be the people who care. Do you honestly think that the Mankanshokus or the Divas would try to get in our way?”

You’d stared at her in consternation. “You know…it’s really freaky how you think things through.”

She’d smiled at you sweetly then murmured into your ear. “Does that make you love me less, Ryuko?”

“No…” you’d relented—then drew back in disbelief. “Wait a minute! That…that *voice*! You’ve…you’ve…” you spluttered, “You’ve been…*teasing* me all this time, haven’t you?”

The look of imperious self-assurance on her face was so *her* that you couldn’t even conjure a trace of indignation. “I had to make sure I knew how you felt beforehand, Ryuko. I *am* Kiryuin Satsuki after all.”

You’d shaken your head in incredulity. “You know, the saddest thing about all this is that I wouldn’t have you any other way.”

The devilish glint in her eye should have been warning enough. “Oh, but I do want you to *have* me, Ryuko…in *all* the possible ways.”

It had occurred to you then (in the brief moment that thought still occurred) that you *might* have bitten off more than you could chew.

-------INUMUTA HOUKA-------

You'd realized when you read her missive than you'd been far more worried that you'd thought. But the letter in your hand reassured you that Lady Satsuki was back in usual form.

Her instructions were as curt as they'd always been; her demands as impossible as they'd always been. But those were the things that had made you follow her from the very start. You'd always been impelled by the strength of her will; you'd always been fascinated by the scale of her vision. You ran your eyes down her list again:

Divest and liquidate ALL REVOCS holdings acquired or established through illegal means. Funnel the proceeds to the Takarada conglomerate of Osaka as war reparations from the Kiryuins.

The first time you'd read it, you'd immediately recognized the brilliant economy behind her plan. It dismantled her mother's diabolical empire, freed the world from a textile monopoly and canceled any debt of gratitude she might have owed to Takarada Kaneo.

Find and destroy ALL information on the Life Fibers contained in the public AND private domain. Leave no photographic, videographic, audio or text-based records of ANY kind. However, retain the results of your and Iori's research and make them inaccessible to everyone save yourself.

The second instruction was exponentially more difficult than the first. It required hacking into the world's leading intelligence agencies without leaving a trace, and also designing viruses that could recognize and destroy specific kinds of data. The intention, however, was clear: to prevent other individuals or organizations from exploiting the Life Fibers yet again *while* preserving enough information to oppose the aliens if they happened to re-emerge.

Plant evidence incriminating a terrorist group behind the destruction of Honnouji and Osaka City. Use Nudist Beach as the scapegoat, but delete ALL surviving members' personnel files.

The third instruction was a necessary corollary to the second. Human beings tended to pick on mysteries—giving the public a plausible explanation behind the Japanese cities' attacks would prevent any further and unwanted investigation.

Find AND destroy all information on the biological connections between me and Matoi Ryuko.

The fourth instruction was the easiest, but it was the one that had actually made you pause. For several long moments, you simply couldn't deduce its strategic—or even tactical—intent. But very few mysteries in the world could elude you for too long, and soon enough, a

memory of Lady Satsuki laughing with a dazed, almost rapturous, and certainly bewildered Matoi came to your questing mind. You'd started, then smiled, as you realized (for the second time) that your brilliant and indomitable mistress…was human after all.

"So…this is your response, Satsuki-sama. I can't really say that I'm all that surprised."

Satisfied with the resolution of your last intellectual puzzle, you'd turned your attention to the orders you'd just been given.

Life certainly never got boring with Kiryuin Satsuki around.

Image *of Ryuko and Satsuki illustrated by artist* ***Mery***.

Chapter End Notes

I really had a blast writing this chapter because it brings back the brilliant, far-sighted and self-assured Satsuki that we all fell in love with in the series. With the 25th episode

of *Kill La Kill* out though (it was released last September 3), I'll probably have to revise a few details in the story to stay consistent with the canon. The good news (at least based on the few synopses I've read) is that the recently released episode doesn't change things all that much. Whew!

P.S. Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Cording

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------KIRYUIN SATSUKI-------

It had been a long while since you'd wielded a sword, and it was only as you moved through the various forms that you realized how much you'd missed the art.

For years, the practice had been your sole refuge—your preferred means of developing the *shoshin*, *zanshin*, *fudoshin* and *mushin* states of mind that had been essential to enduring and eventually overcoming your mother. Why none of your opponents had ever been able to defeat you decisively in combat was simply because none of them had had to survive being the child of Kiryuin Ragyo.

Then Ryuko had defeated your mother, and with a single blow, you'd lost both the blade you'd wielded your entire life and your very reason for even wielding a blade.

Just thinking about the loss of Bakuzan caused a massive and entirely understandable constriction in your throat and chest. While Junketsu had been a tool that had resisted you to the very end, Bakuzan had been both the means and the manifestation of your purpose in life. In very many ways it had been the physical embodiment of your soul, and its destruction symbolized and magnified the loss of meaning that had accompanied your mother's death.

In many ways, it had been entirely understandable how you'd gotten so ill. Ryuko had saved you—not by granting you a new vocation in life (every human being had to fashion their own purpose for themselves)—but by giving you at least one reason to live. And, as if thinking of her had been enough to conjure her presence, you heard her voice ring through the hall.

"It's the first time I've seen you in a *kendogi*."

You'd completed the *kata* you'd been performing, then turned to her and smiled. "I haven't had much time to practice in the last several weeks."

"You looked…different now compared to how you looked before." She'd hesitated for a moment, her eyes narrowing in thought. "The last time I saw you hold a sword, Sanageyama had nearly beaten you. He only held back, he told us, because he felt you'd lost your resolve."

You'd paused for a moment before replying. "I *was* at a loss right after mother died. I don't think it was a surprise to anyone, least of all the Divas. But the last several weeks have given me time to think. Rei's attack right after Ragyo's death tells me that I can't just let my vigilance flag. The Life Fibers will eventually rediscover Earth—or other human beings will

exploit the technology our mother left. While I don't intend to live a fully military life, living a completely normal life doesn't seem like an option either."

"You've made up your mind, haven't you?" she'd asked, a neutral expression on her face. "It explains the difference in how you just carried your sword."

"I'm sorry, Ryuko," you'd told her with a rueful smile. "It's not coming from a refusal to relinquish my blade or an unwillingness to surrender my past—it's just that I find it irresponsible to ignore the risk."

She'd shaken her head, a slight smile on her lips. "There's no need to apologize. This is who you are. And like I said, I wouldn't have you any other way. What's more important to me is: how can I help you in all this?"

You'd stared at her, surprised by how often and how quickly she could touch you to your very core. "You don't have to help me, Ryuko. It's not your fight."

"Maybe it's not, maybe it is. All I know for sure is that I want to be with you." She'd laughed a little embarrassedly then shaken her head. "God, I've only been a sister for a few months and I've gotten clingy really quick—"

You'd cut her off by kissing her deeply. "Ryuko, that's the *sweetest* thing anyone's ever told me," you'd told her softly. She'd grinned at you crookedly in reply. "You can thank me by kissing me again."

You'd obliged immediately and felt her arms twine around your neck. It always surprised you how often and how quickly she could intoxicate you with her touch.

"…Must learn to endure longer without breathing…" she'd muttered incoherently when you both came up for air. Then holding on to the collar of your robe, she'd given your uniform a long and appraising look. "This reminds me …I wanted to ask you if you'd be willing to teach me proper sword fighting technique."

While her request had pleased you, it had also taken you by surprise. "Of course, though I'm a little baffled by the belated interest."

"Well," she'd hemmed, suddenly unable to meet your eyes, "I've still got to kick Sanageyama's ass."

You'd laughed and shaken your head. "Honestly, Ryuko, if you'd known how to fight *properly* back then, none of us could have held you back."

"I'm glad I didn't know how to fight properly then, in that case," she'd wryly replied. "It would have been terrible if I'd actually gotten you killed."

"Would you like to start the lessons now?" you'd asked, reluctantly untangling her arms from where they'd settled around your waist.

"Not now," she'd smiled, a look of sudden mischief on her face. "The sword fighting can wait. For now, I'd rather do a little…wrestling." She'd said the last word at the same time

that she'd jackknifed your legs and swiftly lowered you down onto the floor.

"Oh dear," you'd murmured, amused by how quickly she'd straddled your waist. "Your kendo might lack refinement, but your judo certainly is honed."

"I always had the means," she'd shrugged, "and now, I've certainly got the motivation." Then pinning your arms above your head, she'd leaned down and covered your mouth with hers.

It had occurred to you then (in the brief moment that thought still occurred) that perhaps wrestling would be worth pursuing.

You didn't quite manage to return to your practice for the remainder of that day.

-------MATOI RYUKO-------

You'd stared at her in consternation, wondering how on earth you were supposed to behave yourself at dinner when *she* looked good enough to *eat.*

It was the first time you'd seen her in evening dress—the v-shaped neckline revealed the swell of her breasts and the black satin fabric accentuated the curve of her hips.

You'd wanted nothing more than to take her to the nearest horizontal surface and do things normal sisters definitely didn't do. But you'd managed to act like a gentleman so far, and you'd promised her a real date to celebrate her "full recovery" as Iori had said.

She'd looked at you with some concern (you realized a moment after that you'd forgotten to breathe), and smiled a heart-stopping smile when you helped her get into the car. You'd been practicing how to drive in secret with Soroi for weeks, and were glad for the proficiency that allowed you to steal glances at her every now and then.

She was utterly and devastatingly beautiful, and heads turned when you walked with her from the coupé. She had her hair in a chignon (it was the first time you'd seen it on her too) and something about the line of her neck and the curve of her jaw made it impossible for you to think.

Later when you'd both walked out into the evening streets, you'd reached for her hand to steer her through the crowd. She'd responded by lacing her fingers tightly through yours—and didn't let go of your hand for the rest of the night.

"Let's go up on the Ferris wheel," she'd suggested, her eyes sparkling at the obvious cliché. "Sure," you'd smiled, suddenly besotted by clichés. You'd waited in line, her hand still in yours, and the gatekeeper had smiled at you both and asked: "Sisters?" Without batting an eyelash, your sister had replied, "Girlfriends," and you'd barely managed to stifle the exasperated "Satsuki!" that had broken automatically from your lips.

She'd snuggled against you in the cabin—you'd secured your privacy by shooting a withering stare at the man who'd almost joined you in your car—and you'd sat paralyzed by the then-familiar twinge in your chest, your heart aching with the agony of tenderness and desire that her presence always wrought.

The evening had ended far too quickly (time with her always flew), and you'd stood in front of her door to say good night.

"You look sad…Ryuko," she'd said with concern, her pale and slender hand cupping your cheek.

You'd paused for a moment, before admitting the truth. "I'm going to miss having you all to myself after this. Now that you're well, I'll have to share you with the world."

She'd smiled at you (another heart-stopping smile), then pulled you into her arms and drew you close. "The world will never own me as much as you do, Ryuko." You'd had to stop and close your eyes to manage the massive constriction in your throat and chest, and she chose that moment to cover your mouth with hers.

You'd eventually broken off the kiss, dazed and disoriented as always, then smiled at your sister and nodded good night. "Sweet dreams, Satsuki," you'd said softly and turned on your heel.

"Ryuko," she'd said, at the same time that she'd caught your hand. "Stay with me…tonight."

You'd turned around, the wild beating in your heart matched by a sudden roaring in your ears. "Satsuki…"

She'd looked at you with her mesmerizing eyes (those eyes the same blue shade as yours, with irises now as distinctly shaped as yours), and said the words that you'd wanted—and dreaded—so long to hear:

"Make love to me, Ryuko."

Image *of Satsuki and Ryuko illustrated by artist* ***Aconitea****.*

Chapter End Notes

It took me a while to post this chapter as I had to revise the previous chapters with the release of *Kill La Kill*'s 25th episode (I haven't actually seen it yet but I did read what summaries I could find; if you don't want spoilers, don't read the rest of these notes). The changes were mostly minor, e.g., revising all mentions of the destroyed academy

and city of Honnouji and mentioning the rehabilitation of Rei Hoomaru. The one major change Episode 25 required, however, was a more explicit treatment of Satsuki's loss of purpose with the defeat of Ragyo. By sheer coincidence, many of the existing elements of this story were already compatible with this new piece of character development from Episode 25.

This chapter also relies heavily on concepts drawn from Japan's martial arts tradition (or *budo*). For instance, *shoshin*, *zanshin*, *fudoshin* and *mushin* are states of mind cultivated by practitioners of the martial arts, and Satsuki's imperturbable strength of will in the series can be considered an expression of the *fudoshin* mental state. It's a bit of a pity that the series didn't spend more time exploring Satsuki's martial back story, but I guess that's what fanfiction is for.

Hope you're enjoying the story so far!

P.S. Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Tying

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------KIRYUIN SATSUKI-------

You'd known she'd been holding back for weeks, and to be honest, you'd been holding back as well. She could arouse you with just a look, a smile, a kiss or a caress, and there had been so, *so* many days when all that had restrained you was your adamantine will. But you'd held back because you'd refused to risk freezing at the wrong—and therefore heartbreaking—moment, and having your body recoil inadvertently from memories of an unwanted touch.

But you loved her, with a passion and a tenderness that surprised you with their depth, and she made you feel safe as nothing in the world had ever done. She could restrain herself with you when she'd never been able to restrain herself with the Kamui, and you knew the difference lay solely in the love she bore for you as well.

So when she'd said good night to you after an evening that had been far too short (time with her always flew), you'd caught her hand and refused to let her go.

"Make love to me, Ryuko," you'd asked her softly—and found yourself touched by the need and the fear that glimmered in her eyes.

"I've never…I've never done this before…" she'd whispered to you uncertainly as she held you in the dark.

"Neither have I," you'd answered, brushing your nose against her cheek.

"I love you," she'd said simply, pulling back so she could look you in the eye.

"I know," you'd whispered, resting your forehead against hers.

She'd kissed you then, a long and tender kiss. You'd both managed to stumble onto your bed, and it was *so* like her to cushion your fall by bracing her arm around your waist. You don't know how long the both of you had lain there, content with slow and dreamy explorations of the shape of the other's lips. Then her fingers had brushed against your thigh, and the sensation of skin against sensitized skin completely altered the tenor of her touch.

She'd groaned at that moment and something about the lower register of her voice ignited a liquid heat between your legs. You'd parted your lips as a moan escaped your throat and her tongue slipped past the barrier of your teeth to invade every corner of your mouth.

You'd twined your arms around her neck, finally allowing the full extent of your desire to come rushing to the fore. She moaned when you ground your center against her thigh, the

molten fire between your legs soaking her to the skin. She answered by slipping one hand under the hem of your dress and gliding a hand possessively over the curve of your rear.

She hadn't expected to come into contact with so much bare skin, and you felt her surprise in the gasp that sounded in her throat. You'd reassured her by pressing her hand down on where it already lay and was gratified when her other hand begun to scale the ladder of your ribs.

She paused when she reached the swell of your breasts, and both of you moaned when her thumb grazed over a hardened tip. You'd arched your chest into her grasping hand, and she'd responded by finally freeing you of your dress.

She'd stared at you then with a dazed, certainly rapturous, almost bewildered gaze, and the look of hunger on her face had aroused you even more. You'd reached up and freed your hair of its chignon, and something about the sudden cascade of your raven black locks shook her out of her paralyzed state. She'd reached behind you then and unclasped your bra, and watched you shudder violently as she alternately palmed and fondled your sensitized breasts.

Then locking her piercing blue eyes with yours, she'd bent down and taken one of your nipples into her mouth—while her thumb flicked rhythmically over the other engorged tip.

"Ryuko…" you'd whimpered, your hips grinding harder against her thigh. She'd responded by reaching down and tugging your satin thong off. Her eyes had widened at the sight of you completely nude, and you caught the moment when passion turned to reverence in their cobalt depths. You seized the moment while she stared distracted to roll on top of her and straddle her waist. Then grabbing her by the collar of her shirt, you'd pulled her up to a seated position, and said as clearly and distinctly as you could:

"Fuck me, Ryuko. Fuck me *long* and *hard*."

You saw the cobalt blue eyes turn feral again with desire, and taking two of her fingers with one of your hands, you helped her find her way into your folds.

You both moaned as she sank her fingers deep; she was as aroused by your penetration as you were. "You're so warm…and wet…and tight…," she'd groaned. As you ground your hips against her hand, she'd braced her other arm around your back. "Move inside me…Ryuko," you'd whispered, "Use your fingers to explore…" She'd immediately understood what you meant, and you nearly came when you felt her fingers *curl*. She angled the heel of her palm to rub against the bud between your folds and used your increasing wetness to slide another finger in. "Ryuko…" you'd nearly sobbed, as she thrust her fingers in and out, switching the angle and the speed of her invasions with a precision that nearly drove you mad. You were riding her hand furiously and gasping her name when she suddenly decided to recapture one of your nipples with her mouth. The simultaneous onslaught on so many fronts was more than your endurance could suddenly bear.

You'd cried her name out as you'd shuddered violently, and you felt her bottom hand gentle its assault. You can't remember when the tremors ended, only that you were cradled in her arms when the quaking stopped.

You felt her lips press against your head. “I used to hate it when you did that, you know?” she said with a gentle smile, curling a lock of your hair behind your ear.

“When I did what?” you’d asked her dreamily, draping one of her arms around your waist.

“When you’d look down on me and tell me what to do.”

“And now you don’t hate it?”

“Now…” she’d smiled at you crookedly. “Now…I just find it sexy as hell.”

In reply, you’d sat up slowly and re-straddled her waist, deliberately rubbing the dripping warmth between your legs along her flanks. “You mean when I look down on you like *this*?” She barely managed to whimper in response, her eyes hazy once again with rekindled desire. Then you began unbuttoning the long sleeved shirt she’d worn to your date that night, trailing long and scorching kisses over the growing expanse of naked skin.

She’d begun to blush as soon as you removed her bra, and you took a moment to marvel at her lean and sculpted physique. “You’re so beautiful,” you’d murmured as you trailed a finger down her ribs. She cocked an eyebrow at you in disbelief. “People look at you all the time,” you told her seriously. “What makes you even more alluring is that you don’t even know.”

“I don’t care if people look at me or not,” she’d replied in her candid style. “You’re the only one whom I want to look.”

“I do look,” you’d replied in equally candid fashion, “I look *all* the time—in the most un-sisterly way. Right after I realized I was doing it, I asked for the records of our relationship to be destroyed.”

“It’s a pity, in a way,” she’d answered with a slight smile on her lips. “I’ve gotten to like thinking of you as a sister.”

“You can still think of me that way…in *bed*,” you’d smiled devilishly, beginning to rock your hips against hers. As expected, your calculated mention of the forbidden made her pupils widen further with desire. Taking advantage of her heightened arousal, you’d leaned down and given her a long and searing kiss. Then pinning her hands above her head, you’d moved your kisses to the line of her jaw, then down the curve of her neck, then over the swell of her collar bone, before finally lowering your mouth onto her breast. Then using the flat of your tongue, you’d given her nipple a long and vigorous lick.

“Satsuki…” she’d moaned, arching her back with every touch. You used your palm to knead her other breast, while your tongue continued to lash her nipple.

She began to grind her hips against your thigh, and without interrupting your assault on her breasts too much, you’d reached down and slipped her pants and her underwear off.

“Satsuki…” she’d begun to beg, the wetness between her legs trickling down her thighs. You could feel her nails, as blunt as they were, digging into your back.

“Patience, Ryuko,” you’d whispered in reassurance, then began to kiss your way down her ribs. You paused when you reached the gap between her legs and wet your lips and smiled. Then before she could realize what you intended, you used the flat of your tongue to take a slow and thorough lick of the crevice between her folds.

Your name escaped her throat in a ragged and startled cry. You’d smiled briefly, then lowered your head again to the space between your sister’s thighs. You’d wanted this for so, *so* long that you had to restrain yourself and moderate your pace. You lapped, and flicked, and sucked, and nuzzled, alternating between various applications of your mouth and tongue and lips and teeth. You heard her heartfelt litany of obscenities alternate with cries of your name, and felt her hands twine into your hair as she ground her hips into your face. Then you’d inserted one, then two, then three, of your slender fingers into her folds—and that was when she came violently, her hips bucking up and down, your name a jagged cry on her lips.

Then you’d come up and held her to your chest as her breathing had slowed and quieted down.

“I used to hate it when you did that, you know?” you’d said, smiling into her hair.

“When I did what?” she’d asked languorously, tucking her head into your neck.

“When you’d say my name and curse at the same time.”

“And now you don’t hate it?”

“Now…I just find it sexy as hell.”

“Copycat,” she’d murmured, and lain still for a moment—then suddenly groaned and shaken her head.

“What’s Soroi going to think when he sees us?” she’d lamented.

You’d paused for a moment, wisely refraining from telling her that your butler had probably deduced it from the start.

“Let’s just tell him we like keeping it in the family,” you’d answered with a poker face.

She’d shot you a pained look. “That’s *not* funny...”

Your shoulders had started shaking. “It *is* funny.”

Her shoulders began to shake as well. “You’re right. It *is* funny.”

Then you’d stopped laughing and rolled yourself atop her again.

“You know what?” you asked her in a carefully neutral voice. “Iori never did get around to testing my stamina with the Fibers.”

She looked up at you with a straight face. “And…you want your obedient little sister to help you out?”

The devilish grin on your lips told her all she needed to know.

Neither of you got any sleep that night.

Images of Satsuki and Ryuko illustrated by artist Sabachiyo Land.

Chapter End Notes

Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Weaving

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

-------GAMAGORI IRA-------

You'd somehow felt she was different the moment you stepped through her door. It was the first time all four of you had gotten together since the day she'd sent you all away.

She'd begun apologizing for calling all of you so unceremoniously when Jakuzure suddenly cut her off.

"Before you continue, Satsuki-chan, there's something we'd like to give you first."

All of you had looked on with barely concealed anticipation as she unwrapped the long rectangular object that you'd lain at her feet. Then all of you had looked away with blurry eyes when she held your gift up with slightly trembling hands.

"But for what…?" she'd whispered, the faintest tremor in her voice.

You'd watched Inumuta shrug as flippantly as he could, but you also saw the flood of emotions that flickered across his face. "Oh, I don't know…For saving the world? For managing to live? For making our lives so much more interesting than they would otherwise be?"

"How…?" she'd asked, holding the snow white blade up to the light.

"Inumuta designed it, Satsuki-sama" you'd answered, "Iori engineered it, Jakuzure funded it, I forged it, and Sanageyama tested it."

"It's beautiful…" she'd whispered, drawing the sword reverentially from its sheath.

"It's not Bakuzan, Satsuki-sama," you'd begun to apologize with your head bowed low, "but Inumuta has assured us that it's just as sharp."

"It's not Bakuzan, Gamagori," she'd answered, with eyes that seemed a little too bright. "But it's stunning, and flawless, and…more suited for what lies ahead."

"Are you going to name it, Satsuki-chan?" Jakuzure had asked.

"I have the perfect name for it," she said, turning to all of you with a smile. "I name this blade…'Ikigai'." All of you had paused in recognition of what the word implied, then after a moment, she'd turned again and said, "I don't know how to begin thanking all of you for this…"

“We’ll consider it even,” Inumuta replied, a familiar gleam in his eye, “if you tell us what impossible future you’ve got planned for us next.”

“Before we get into that, Inumuta,” Sanageyama had suddenly interrupted to all of your surprise, “there’s something that needs to be handled first.”

And without any further warning—and with a speed that meant that you couldn’t block him as her shield—he’d launched himself at the figure of Satsuki-sama.

-------JAKUZURE NONON-------

You knew he’d been waiting for his chance for a long, *long* time. You’d watched him grow so much stronger with his Shingantsu, and just when he could finally test himself against the only worthy opponent in his eyes—that opponent had lost the strength of her resolve.

Now she was back—and you’d known she was different the moment you’d walked through her door. You also knew that what was at stake was whether he would still follow her or not. You could almost feel his satisfaction as he thrust his *shinai* at her with deadly speed—there was no *way* that anyone could dodge the velocity of his blow.

Then all of you had gasped as Satsuki-chan had suddenly *disappeared*, and all of you heard her murmur when she materialized behind his back: “Did you think you could sneak up on me, Sanageyama?” You’d closed your eyes in sympathy when you saw her tap the pommel of her sword on the space between his ribs…

You’d opened your eyes to find him on his knees, the disbelief evident in his dark gray eyes. “How…?” he’d managed to choke out, “How did you manage to evade the vision of my mind’s eye? Nothing in this world should be able to escape Shingantsu…”

You’d watched her walk over to him and hold out a hand. “Exactly, Sanageyama. No-*thing* in this world can escape Shingantsu.”

He’d frowned for a moment, then his eyes had widened in shock. “You’ve perfected the state of *mushin no shin*…” he’d whispered.

She’d shaken her head. “Not perfected, Sanageyama; I’ve simply attained a deeper level of it, perhaps.”

He’d chuckled to himself and clasped her hand. “Just when I thought I’d reached you, Satsuki-sama, you moved beyond my grasp again. You’ve truly found your *ikigai*.”

“You’re an idiot, as always,” you’d muttered behind his back. “Just because you nearly won when she was down in the dumps doesn’t mean that you’re a match for her, wild monkey.”

“Jakuzure-san,” Gamagori rumbled ominously behind your back, “kindly watch your language in Satsuki-sama’s presence.”

Inumuta chuckled. “The academy’s closed and the city’s gone, but some things have stayed the same it seems—“

Then he’d frozen in midsentence, as did the rest of you, when Matoi Ryuko walked out of Satsuki-chan’s bedroom dressed only in a long-sleeved polo shirt that just managed to conceal the tops of her thighs. “Satsuki…” she’d murmured, rubbing her eyes—then she’d stood stock still when she realized who else was in the room.

“Ryuko…” Like one unit, all four pairs of your eyes had swiveled in unison to behold the impossible sight of Kiryuin Satsuki with a full blush on her cheeks. With a dignity that only *she* could have possibly mustered, she’d pulled the cover off her dining table and draped it around her sister faster than any of you could mutter the word “incest.”

You’d only needed one look at the two of them to grasp exactly what was going on. Glancing sideways at Inumuta, you realized that your team’s resident genius had probably known well beforehand. You also apprehended from your oldest friend’s silence that she was…concerned about how you’d all react.

After a long and pregnant pause, you’d shaken your head and sighed.

“Satsuki-chan, I’ve followed you since we were five through every single one of your hare brained schemes. Of all of them, this has *got* to be the looniest—even topping whacking your own mom off. But,” and you took a deep breath again and sighed, “of all of your hare brained schemes, this is the only one that’s actually made you smile.”

Then you’d looked straight at Matoi and growled. “Mess this up, delinquent, and I swear I’ll get you—*and* your Life Fibers—all tied up in knots.”

Then you’d turned on your heel and called out to the others. “Let’s go everyone. Let’s not ruin the gift giving glow by going straightaway to business. We can handle that another day.”

You could see Inumuta on the verge of protesting, so you’d fixed him your vilest glare and hissed, “You’re going to pay for not telling *me* right away, dog.”

He’d shrugged and mouthed back, “It wasn’t for *me* to tell.” But just like Gamagori and Sanageyama, he’d turned obediently at your command and you’d all bowed and bid your goodbyes to Satsuki-chan.

“Jakuzure-san,” Gamagori rumbled, and your heart had sunk at the thought of all the explaining that lay ahead. “Could you clarify to me exactly what happened and why we had to leave Satsuki-sama so quickly?”

Even Sanageyama had looked at you expectantly, and your mood had blackened further on realizing that Inumuta had conveniently jogged on ahead.

Satsuki-chan, you’d thought darkly at that moment, *you so,* so *owe me for this.*

-------SANAGEYAMA UZU-------

You'd ended up walking her home as Gamagori had a date with Mankanshoku and Inumuta had research results from Iori that he'd wanted to review.

She was uncharacteristically quiet as you walked by her side, her long pink bangs hooding her eyes. After a moment, she'd suddenly asked:

"So, do you think they're going to work out?"

You'd paused briefly before giving your reply. "They're alike enough in the essentials that I do think they'll work out. But the rest of the world won't be as understanding or forgiving, and even for two people as headstrong as they are…it's going to make for a difficult life."

She'd responded in a neutral voice. "The rest of the world doesn't know. And it never will—not if Inumuta's had something to do with it, which I suspect he has."

You'd glanced at her with an eyebrow raised. She'd always been so proud of the fact that she was Satsuki-sama's oldest…friend.

"Yes, I love her," she'd spoken out loud, addressing the thoughts you'd left unsaid. "But I'm not *in* love with her—so you can just get that out of your space."

You'd been startled, as always, by the acuity of feminine intuition, then shaken your head and smiled. "You could have fooled me, the way you always went on about her."

She'd kept her silence for a moment, then spoken again. "Sanageyama, would you die for her?"

You'd answered without thinking. "Yes, I would."

"Exactly," she'd said, and you suddenly understood what she meant.

The words that came out of your lips next surprised even you.

"Go out with me, Jakuzure."

She'd stopped walking, and you realized that you couldn't see the expression on her face even with your Shingantsu.

"You're fond of monkeys anyway, aren't you?"

You were gratified to see that her shoulders had begun to shake.

"Yes I am," she'd said, and there was a gleam in her eyes that made you hope. "If you don't treat me right though, wild monkey, your skull's ending up on my cap—"

You'd silenced her by covering her mouth with yours. Her hands were gripping your lapels by the time you'd broken off your kiss. "A snake's tongue has its other uses, I see," you'd told her with a rakish grin.

She'd looked at you with narrowed eyes, then replied with a sly and sudden smile, "Behave, wild monkey, and I just might show you what other *things* my tongue can do."

It had occurred to you then (in the brief moment that thought still occurred) that you *might* have bitten off more than you could chew.

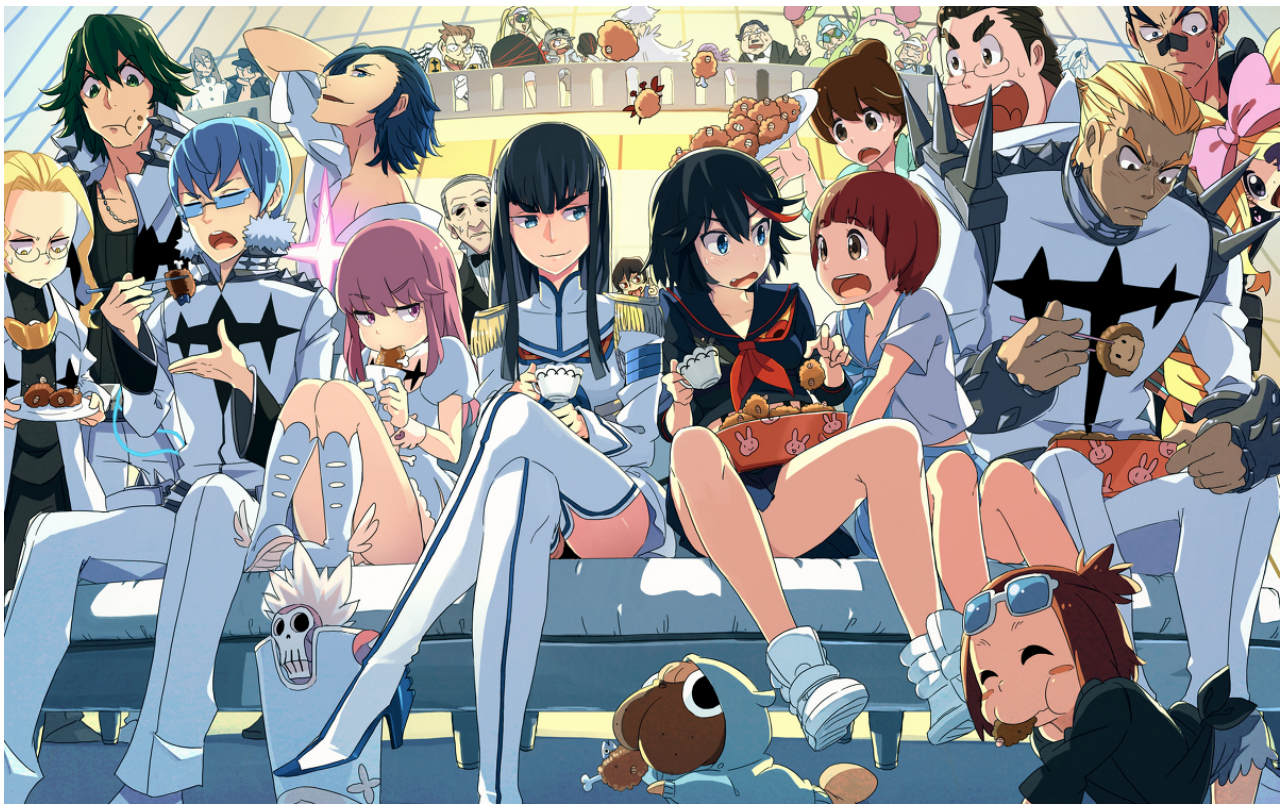

Image *of the Kill la Kill cast illustrated by artist* ***Sugi Koutarou***.

Chapter End Notes

The word *ikigai* captures the Japanese equivalent of what the French would refer to as a *raison d'être* (or what English speakers would call a "reason for being"). Given that Bakuzan symbolized Satsuki's previous purpose in life, I thought it would be fitting to have another sword represent her newfound purpose (I also thought it would be nice to make Ikigai a snow white blade in contrast with Bakuzan which was a black-bladed *katana*). Having the Elite Four and Iori give Satsuki Ikigai symbolizes the fact that her new reasons for living are rooted in the love of her family: first with Ryuko who is her biological family and second with the Divas who are her extended family.

The phrase *mushin no shin*, on the other hand, is a Zen expression that can be translated as "mind without mind." It's a mental state entered by the most skilled of martial artists, where the practitioner's mind is completely free of discursive thought and judgment, so the person is totally free to act towards an opponent without hesitation, intention, plan or direction. *Mushin no shin* negates the advantage conferred by Sanageyama's *Shingantsu*, because *Shingantsu* is premised on sensing the opponent's intentions and acting

accordingly. Sanageyama fails to “see” Satsuki’s actions because her actions have no preceding intention—she is so fully immersed in the present that her actions are spontaneous responses to circumstances as they arise. All of which is a fancy way of saying that Satsuki totally kicks ass. :-D

P.S. Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

The Twining

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

~~~~-------EPILOGUE: MATOI RYUKO-------~~~~

"And how, exactly, did we end up having sex again?" you'd asked your sister from where you lay limp and tangled underneath her limbs.

"Well, you walked out into my living room half-naked with my friends in attendance, and after they left out of a sense of propriety, I marched you back into my bedroom where you promptly tripped over my tablecloth, fell over and started groping my breasts. I doubt I need to recount the rest."

"I did *not* grope your breasts. I was trying to find my *balance*. And *you* were making it harder by trying to remove my shirt."

"I was *not* trying to remove your shirt. I was trying to fix your buttons. You'd missed that second hole from the top right there. Honestly, you walk out of my bedroom in a state of indecency—and worse, it's a state of *disheveled* indecency."

"Oh, don't pin this down on *me.* You know better than anyone else that I don't like exposing too much skin. If I happened to be disoriented this morning, it's because *someone* kept me up all night."

She'd looked at you then with a trace of smugness."Really, Ryuko, you should *try* to keep up with your elders."

Your eyes had widened in righteous indignation. "I *thought* that given our 'overly-developed sense of sibling rivalry' we were supposed to avoid competing against each other. 'Think of it as a honeymoon of sorts,' you'd said."

"But we've moved on to a *different* kind of honeymoon," she'd replied, climbing on top of you and straddling your waist again. "The kind where some sorts of competitive…*games* are not just healthy but desirable…" She had a gleam in her eye that you'd begun to recognize from repeated exposure since the previous night.

It had occurred to you then (in the brief moment that thought still occurred) that you had *definitely* bitten off more than you could chew.

Somewhere in the recesses of your brain, you thought you heard a chuckle from Senketsu.

Image *of Satsuki and Ryuko illustrated by artist* ***Seozo****.*

Chapter End Notes

So that includes the first story of the *Les Soeurs Ciseaux* series! I have to say that I'm actually a bit sad that the story's ended—it was so, so much fun to write and all of you have been a great audience. I'd love to hear more of your thoughts, especially as there's still a second story following that takes place nearly three years after the first. That one is DEFINITELY going to be tons of fun with hardly any drama.

Hope you all continue following this series!

P.S. Writer **LilyArckerman** has been kind enough to start translating this story into Chinese! If you'd like to check out her translation of this chapter, just click **here**!

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